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ABSTRACT

This newsletter issue focuses on programming undertaken to address the health and educational needs of rural families in developing and developed nations. After examining the nature of rural families and rural poverty, the newsletter discusses: (1) the Mon Women's Organization in Thailand; (2) The "Contact With Kids" parent education project in Australia; (3) the "Preescolar na Casa" television program for preschoolers in Spain; (4) the Mobile Early Childhood Development project in Portugal; (5) the "Learning for All Trust" parent workshop program in South Africa; (6) the development of rural children in Peru; and (7) Colombia: communities helping themselves. Other sections of the newsletter report on educational programs undertaken by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, a survey of newsletter readers, and reviews of resources and books of interest to early childhood educators. (MDM)

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ED 382 370

wsletter

78+ April 1995

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Reaching rural families

Trying to define a 'rural family' merely opens up more questions: where does 'rural' stop and 'urban' start? What about families that live in the country but depend on remittances from family members in urban areas? What of those for whom concepts such as urban and rural are irrelevant – the pastoralists, nomads and remote indigenous populations, for example? And what of the families whose children move between rural and urban settings and different family members because of such factors as seasonal work or drought?

For the purposes of this article, we take 'rural' to imply remoteness from centres of population and therefore from the resources, services and amenities which characterise much urban life; dependence on the land; and some cultural or social tradition of living away from urban areas. So there is no single archetypal rural family; but rather an extraordinarily rich range of families.

To avoid repetition we have excluded discussion about complementary topics and themes that have featured in recent *Newsletters:* 'Mobility and young children' (NL76); 'Women and child care' (NL71); 'Children in conflict' (NL67); and 'Para-professionals as educators' (NL64).[1]

below: mothers and children in the high Andes of Peru. (National Non-formal Education Project)

Rural realities

Just as there is no archetypal rural family, there is no archetypal rural setting. Again the range is enormous: from peace and tranquility to commercial invasions and powerfully armed militaristic operations; from freshness and plenty to polluted rivers and a lack of productive land; from well established agricultural economies to selling prices for basic commodities that are manipulated by remote speculators and do not even cover the costs of production.[2]

Given the range of such settings, the realities of life for rural children are again enormously varied. From direct observation and from applying what we currently believe about the developmental needs

In this issue

Reaching rural families: programmes for remote rural communities and families. With contributions from **Thailand:** displaced rural families page 5; **Australia:** generating a sense of community page 5; **Spain:** inside rural homes page 6; **Portugal:** mobile ECD page 8; **South Africa**: ECD in broad context page 9; **Peru**: the development of rural children page 11; **Colombia:** communities helping themselves page 12; **Wales:** discovering the needs page 12

Network news page 14

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Jamaica: working hard to raise awareness page 18

Outdoor environments: a planning guide page 19

Toddlers on the move page 20

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Characteristics of the rural poor

landless – low life expectancy –
too little land – low income –
family too large – irregular income –
malnutrition – weak bargaining position –
ill health – poor communications = isolation –
undereducated – pre-occupied with survival –
high infant mortality – indebtedness

Explanations of modern rural poverty

Extraction of production
Uneven exchange between third and first world; and rural and urban sectors
Pre–modern social structures and attitudes
Ill health and malnutrition
Poor environments (natural/man made problems)
Natural disasters
Shortage of resources
Poor distribution of resources
Wars and disruptions
Rapid population growth
Over population
Degradation of the environment
Inappropriate development policies
Bias in policies against the rural sector
Inefficient governments
Lack of education
Imposed monoculture farming
Structural adjustment policies

Based on Dixon, C. *Rural development in the third world*, 1990; Routledge, London; (with additions)

of young children, we can see that many rural settings do not provide an ideal development environment. Indeed we know that many rural children will be deprived to some extent; and that the nature and origins of much of that deprivation will be distinct from the kinds of deprivation that afflict many urban children.

To take a few obvious examples: they may have access to fewer preventative and curative health services; may have to travel longer distances for their formal education; and may suffer directly from natural disasters like drought. But we also have to remember that – as for urban children – the scale of this deprivation may range from the insignificant to the vitally important. On the bright side it may also be offset by advantages – for example, clean air, less stress, more opportunities for safe exploration and play, and so on.

Particular programmes for rural families?

Given that poverty is a key factor in disadvantage among young children, some people feel that geographical location – rural or urban – is irrelevant: the main job is elimination of poverty *per se*.

And this attitude can too easily be transferred to early childhood development as well. For example, if many aspects of the development of young children seem universal then it's irrelevant whether the setting is rural or urban. From this it's easy to believe that there are some universal approaches to setting up and operating early childhood development programmes also.

Different realities, different approaches

But, far from offering a small range of ideal models to successfully meet all child development needs, projects contributing their experiences to this issue of the *Newsletter* reveal a tremendous variety of approaches to reaching a great variety of 'rural families'. For example, the National Non-formal Education Project in Peru is working with many different cultures. Its response is to ensure that each cultural group helps determine the precise ways in which the work is established and implemented. This has many far reaching effects. For example, it means the abolition of a meaningless – city derived – concept like 'The Peruvian Child' and leads to the establishment of a wider and much more complex notion (page 11).

Faced with rural abandonment and a consequent depletion in formal services, part of the approach of the Mobile Early Childhood Development Project in Portugal is to work first from within individual homes and then build out from there to form educational networks between the participating families. The effect is to create a spontaneous sense of community self-help which is nurtured and developed by local and regional animators (page 8).

On a different level, modern technology can be harnessed to respond precisely to local needs. In Galicia, north west Spain, the *Preescolar na Casa* (Pre-school in the home) project, operates directly with families in many remote communities. To complement this, it has also formed an alliance with the local public television station. Ideas, needs and experiences are fed in from the work with the families to a special joint production team. The team then goes on to make and broadcast exactly appropriate programmes ... and then goes through evaluation processes to check their worth (page 5).

Going deeper, some analysis of project approaches reveals why they are distinct when they are compared with those of urban programmes. For example, they have to combat remoteness by bringing services and resources closer to where people are. But when they do this, they are actually dealing with isolation – an outcome of remoteness. The work of Contact Mobile in Australia shows this. It operates in one of the world's least populated areas and, among other objectives, sets out to counter social and language development problems that isolated children can develop. Interestingly, isolation is a problem for the workers too; and annual meetings, a national association of mobile workers and a regular newsletter help to combat this (page 6).

Determining factors

Underlying much rural work are factors that actually shape the nature and operation of programmes. These include the geographical: seasons, climate, soil fertility, remoteness from roads, and so on. They influence local needs, affect local time scales and schedules, and often mean that meeting needs is a matter of holding a balance between careful planning and fast adaptation to changing circumstances.

above: this toddler was fortunate: a trained village health worker was able to give first aid before the long journey to the nearest hospital (Ecuador)

This can be seen in something as obvious as overcoming challenges like climate and remoteness. For example, it might be that an infant inoculation programme can easily reach rural families in the wet season in one place because families cannot work the fields and so are at home; while in another, getting around in the wet season is especially difficult because the roads and bridges have been washed away. And it then might be that the whole programme has to be rethought because those bridges won't be repaired for many months, the floods bring cholera in their wake, and there are long delays until the vaccines and medicines arrive. And when they do, the journey times are now so long that the cool boxes can't hold them at a safe temperature for long enough.

Policies, attitudes, actions

In terms of impact, formal policies and informal attitudes are similarly important. One major problem for many rural communities results from inadequate organisation coupled with distance from centres of political power: quite simply, they lack political significance and are therefore seldom reached when major programmes are being planned and implemented. One common outcome is that national programmes stop in the city outskirts, often because of a lack of planning, resources or real determination to take them further.

One of the most obvious ramifications of such neglect is the population flow from rural areas to the world's towns and cities. To combat this, some governments – those of India and Brazil are examples – are working hard to provide rural areas with the kinds of support needed to enhance life and make them more attractive to their former inhabitants. Such massive interventions inevitably raise many questions about how governments can usefully and properly encourage large numbers of people to settle in any given place. But, if rural life is to be sustainable, this is the scale of intervention that is necessary.

But, no matter how well thought through and developed, plans of any size can be thwarted if there is no general will to make them succeed. Moving from the global, institutional perspective to that of individuals, plans founder if, for example, doctors, teachers and development workers decide to remain in the towns and cities where the life can appear more seductive and the rewards more lucrative.

City dwellers also tend to set the agenda for rural expectations: their aspirations and attitudes reach out to rural families and influence them. This can mean villages have televisions – even satellite dishes – rather than clean water. It can mean that communities build themselves health posts but fail to tackle the bigger and more complex problems of ensuring that they are staffed. It can mean that parents insist on their children having the same educational aspirations, curricula and materials that urban children have ... though these make little practical sense to the realities of even most urban children.

Attitudes of development and funding agencies can also be questioned at times, especially because of their impact on the identification of regions, communities and foci for action. For example, Chambers[1] lists six biases that can be detected in some programmes: spatial bias (easily accessible location for projects); project bias (situated close to other projects); personal bias (work with approachable individuals); seasonal bias (reluctance to work in bad climates); diplomatic bias (reluctance to give offence); and professional bias (work around one's own discipline). To these might be added temporal bias (work around the current 'hot theme').

Local human factors

The people and organisations that have power at international, national and regional level inevitably have some of the largest and most significant influences on the lives and prospects of rural families.

However, ECD projects take account of very local factors in their work. For example, mothers – here, as everywhere, likely to be those most responsible for ECD – may have particularly difficult lives: they may have to spend hours each day walking long distances for essentials such as water; may be part- or full-time agricultural workers; and may earn money – perhaps in distant markets. This is in addition to their roles in the family as nurse, cook, housekeeper, mother and partner.

Yet resilience makes these same mothers resourceful, capable and strong enough to take even more responsibility for the well-being of their families. Because of this, many early childhood development programmes start with mothers and cover personal development and empowerment before – in many

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above: rural transport can be effective ... but can also be frustrating, inefficient and slow (Ecuador)

cases – moving on towards wider community development objectives.

However, the rural setting presents more problems. For example, communities are often scattered and thinly populated. This means that the logistics of work are difficult; and that there are fewer people around to do the work. Added to this is the lack of access to resources, support and networks. Not unexpectedly, projects respond to this. For example, in Colombia the Rural Family and Childhood Project finds ways of helping *animadoras* (enablers: trained mothers from the communities) to develop personally and professionally, so reinforcing their motivation and commitment to the programme: the *animadoras* change and are changed in ways that they like. The project also ensures that communities retain control of their own bodies of accumulated knowledge, so helping to sustain community solidarity ... and support for the *animadoras* (page 12-13).

Indigenous peoples

Many indigenous peoples are rural dwellers, and many once enjoyed free access to more than enough land for a sustainable, culturally particular life. Now some are making strong efforts to re-establish the values that enabled them to work closely and effectively with the land. Ideally this means regaining access to their historic lands .... but that is seldom practicable. However, in Australia, recent legislation has enabled Aboriginals to reclaim their old lands or at least negotiate compensation deals with the mineral companies who exploit the natural resources that lie beneath them.

Because large amounts of money are involved, this can provide opportunities for the revalidation of Aboriginal values, and for setting up self-determined educational and development programmes. Within such programmes, the implications for early childhood work are obvious.

Effective approaches

Much of the project work described in this *Newsletter* is about a wide variety of community development work; and it is certainly true that, despite low population densities and communication difficulties, community development approaches can be highly effective in reaching rural families. But there is a rider: ECD is not necessarily the first priority for rural communities. Rural families have more pressing needs and community development programmes must take account of all of them. The challenge is to ensure that ECD remains on the list of priorities. To ensure this, it must be clearly seen as the community's investment for the future.

However, the community development approach alone is not sufficient. To complement it, efficient coordination, and further development of such health, child care and education services as exist are essential. This approach again features prominently in project work; and is often linked to some kind of programme which generates viable local alternatives by identifying and developing community resources.

To add to such initiatives, there are many smaller programmes operated by governments and national and international NGOs to reach rural families. The most successful of these coordinate their work with that of other players in the field, and anchor their work in realities and needs.

Finally, it is clear that the most effective work is based on working **with** rural families, not just **for** them. ❑

right: mobile teams can bring large and small items of play equipment to remote families and small communities (Contact Children Mobile project, Australia)

Notes

1. Back issues of the *Newsletters* referred to in this article are available, free of charge for single copies, from the Communications Section of the Foundation, at the address on the back cover. Some of the themes discussed are also available in Spanish in *Boletin informativo* numbers 6, 7 and 8. These are also available free of charge.

2. Dixon, C. *Rural development in the third world*, 1990, Routledge, London, ISBN 0-415-01597-9

3. Chambers, R. *Rural development: putting the last first*, 1983, Longman Scientific and Technical, Harlow, England, ISBN 0-582-64443-7

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Thailand: displaced rural families, their realities and responses

Small Stream

'Though the stream may not be big or wide like a river, sea or ocean, it flows from the height of the mountains and has the ability to attract tired and weary Karenni soldiers, the destitute who cross over the border and the traders. Similarly, we women should be like the stream and able to attract as many people as we can.
Mu Hsee

Mon Women's Organisation (MWO) was set up in 1988 and currently has its headquarters in Pa Yaw, one of the Mon refugee camps on the lower Thai-Burma border. Due to continuing disruption by the Burmese military authorities, MWO finds it increasingly difficult to maintain its network throughout Mon state in Burma.

The aims of the organisation are:

- to enable women to take charge of their own lives so that they will be more effective in the communities and for their country;
- to ensure that women have the same opportunities as men;
- to maintain the indigenous Mon culture;
- to unite Mon women so that their work in the community is maximised;
- to increase solidarity between Mon women's groups as well as with other women's groups.

Due to frequent changes of location, it has been difficult for MWO to operate long term programmes. The work of the members has concentrated on serving the immediate needs of the community in health care and hygiene, especially when children are sick. They have also encouraged vegetable gardens to increase their nutritious food intake as well as sewing clothes for their families.

In April 1994, MWO organised their first training for women 'Community development/women's participation'

above: Karenni refugee women have formed their own organisation – the Karenni Women's Organisation - and are offering training for nursery school teachers. These are the reflections and drawing of a Karenni para-professional nursery school teacher during her training (Thailand/Burma border)

From *Indigenous voice*, January 1995, published by Indigenous Women's Development Centre (IWDC), PO Box 169, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 200, Thailand.
Tel/fax: 66.53.278 945

Reaching rural families

Australia: generating a sense of community

June Jeremy

Australia is the most remote and isolated of all habitable continents; is the most isolated location in the world; and is the most sparsely populated continent – two persons per square kilometre.

This article, prepared by the Project Coordinator of Contact Children's Mobile describes how the project combats the isolation of the most isolated of Australian families – those living in the bush (Australia's remote but habitable rural areas).

The centre of Australia looks empty. It is! But the families who do live out there have a unique ability to cope and improvise. And, while their needs are also unique, so are the services that have evolved to meet them. But, even so, rural and remote families have difficulties accessing reliable information, essential services, and education and employment opportunities. And they have often had a restricted exposure to the wide range of experiences, viewpoints, customs, relationships, and study and vocational choices that urban dwellers take for granted.

Realities for children

For children, such realities make for a complex development environment. For example, most are educated by their parents using correspondence courses. Whilst this may work out well, it is a very different – and perhaps more limiting – experience than attending a school. Their isolation is made worse by an economy which is in poor condition; lack of telephones; expensive or inadequate transport; vast distances and very poor roads; high living costs; limited Government funding for special projects; lack of stimuli and emotional support; social, language and cultural barriers; and climatic conditions (including extremes of temperature, floods, and droughts and the consequent bushfires).

The Contact Children Mobile project

The International Year of the Child 1979 had many successful spin-offs. One was an Australian Government project called 'Contact'. It provided information, support and resources to people caring for young children in isolated circumstances; and it helped to identify children's needs.

In 1980 a study of the needs of 500 families with young children was published by Contact. It analysed families from socially isolated public housing estates, a culturally isolated ethnic group and geographically isolated families; and showed that the most likely ways to reach targets would be through people to peoplecontact; and through using media, including print, radio and television, and audio-visuals.

This was followed up by consultations with rural communities – many of which were tape recorded – and all of which were systematically circulated and reported back to the communities. These produced options and alternatives for children's services.

They also enhanced the credibility of the project and alerted Government departments to people's real needs; and prepared the ground for the work of the project, especially contacting people and starting to form networks.

With State Government funding, the Contact Children's Services Switchboard was established in 1981, based on one in the UK. It was advertised through an exciting television commercial and the theme music was also played on radio with high profile media people donating their time to announce the number. At the same time a weekly radio programme about child care matters and called 'Contact With Kids' was broadcast on an educational station.

Building up

A second and third survey provided more facts about needs and targeted Government departments and ministries about policies affecting isolated families. Contact followed these up with proposals for future directions.

By 1982 3,500 copies of Contact With Kids newsheets/posters had been produced. They give parents and professionals an update on new ideas, activities, tips on child rearing, child development, relationships and successful community ventures. Other materials included five sheets called *'Watch Me Grow'* – a briefing on what to expect from, and what to do with children 0-5 years; a list of funders; and guides to developing community activities. Some have recently been translated for use in Thailand, whilst others have been reprinted in magazines and on the backs of the nation's breakfast cereal packets.

Videos showed parents and community members both how to recognise some of the individual needs of children, and how to see the possibilities for useful work with them. One outcome is a realisation that activity programmes for children can reduce social problems.

In 1987 the Foundation-supported Contact Children's Mobile started operations to reach the most remote populations. It provides educational activities, resources, family and community support, a daily radio programme and a series of videos specifically for rural and isolated children and their families. Through regular visits, the mobile team concentrates on social and language skills, providing stimuli for the social/emotional, physical, intellectual and creative development of children. As a result, the small remote village where the proj-ect is based is on the map for enriching an area the size of quite a large country. It is a model approach for children and families that experience acute social, emotional, geographic, cultural and economic isolation.

Training, development and support for the isolated

Training for Contact Children's Mobile workers often includes parents as well as teachers – concentrating on overcoming isolation through practical educational activities. It is linked to people in other parts of the region, takes place in homes, and is supported by specially commissioned experts.

But, just as parents suffer from isolation, so too do workers. To cope with this, we hold National Mobile Musters (gatherings) in which ideas, information and experiences can be shared, support offered and professional development furthered. There is also a National Mobile Association for good networking of ideas and experiences and *The Western Mobile Rag*, a regular newsletter. Visiting celebrities raise the prestige and sense of worth of the rural dwellers and workers.

Sharing information internationally is also vital: our problems and needs are special but similar to many of those in other countries. We were able to help two Aborigines to travel to Israel and Kenya to investigate how other projects confront their re-alties ... and to show them what we do.

Finally we have ensured proper representation by workers and parents in the operations of the Management Committee. Recently we have begun a system of tele-conferencing – live television links with remote areas so representatives can participate in meetings.

Reaching rural families

Spain: inside rural homes

Antón Pinto

This article describes the work of the Foundation-supported *Preescolar na Casa* (Pre-school in the home) in rural Spain in its work with a regional television station to make and transmit pre-school programmes. The station's staff take care of the technical side, so leaving the project free to concentrate on the quality of the programmes.

We are making a television programme

Preescolar na Casa TV (PNC-TV) is a fruitful cooperation between *Preescolar na Casa* and the Galician public Television service in north west Spain. The television station contributes technical expertise, wide audience coverage and a production team. *Preescolar na Casa* contributes the work and ideas of a team of some fifty orientators (guides) channelled through a special PNC-TV team of five.

This team is responsible for the programmes; and its specific tasks range from direction and presentation of programmes, to external relations, looking after invited artists, production of scripts, field work, and recording on location.

The most important element in the programmes are the 'invited artists', that is, the participating families with children between 0 and 6 years of age. They contribute experiences and ideas from their groups, their meetings and their homes... and they

What is in the programmes?

Title: Preescolar na Casa

Learning from life: reports and commentary about the way children benefit from their immediate environment.

The treasure of the word: stories, dialogues, riddles, the magic of the word.

Interviews, reporting and commentary: with people who have something important to say about the great world of the family.

Stimulation: stimulating all the abilities of the newcomer from before birth – learning and enjoying together.

Playing is their life: various ideas for games and toys to make at home.

Family corner: here anything can be covered – small specialised consultancies, hygiene, nutrition, presentation of books, and so on.

Summary: the image and the word – we finish with a photograph, an image to fit the words of the programme.

also contribute those great little artists, the children, who are always unpredictable before the cameras.

And, do you know why?

A lot has been said about the influence of the magic window called television on the family relationships – and especially about the education of the child.

Preescolar na Casa and Galician Television have an important goal: to bring ideas for reflection and educational action to society in general – and especially to the family.

The aim is

to **disseminate** knowledge about the growing human being; and about preventing avoidable problems;

to **contribute** to reflection on the importance of early childhood experiences;

to **convince** people that they can respond to the various needs of their children;

to **show** the **value** of the adult/child relationship, of the child's curiosity, of play as a means to learn and develop;

to **offer** songs, tales and riddles that open the doors to language and fantasy development;

to help people **discover** the importance of the elements that surround the process of learning and of the development of the child's personality;

to **demonstrate** the making of toys to **suggest** interesting books for preparation for parenthood – also for children ;

to help **reflection** on the fact that the parents and the family, contribute to children's identities;

to **create** awareness of the importance of integrated and non-sexist education.

We respond to the needs of the human beings from the moment of conception, and even before that. Is this too much? We are realistic: we only ask the impossible of what is possible.

It isn't easy

Our **audience** is the general population but our programmes are especially directed to the families that have children between 0 and 6 years of age. And we have to be good or they will switch off.

The **content** of our programmes come from many sources: a paediatrician may talk about children's fears one week; an ethnologist will talk about celebrating carnival the next week. The PNC-TV team channels in the worries and demands of the general team, and ideas and experiences from the parents' meetings and audiences. It pays special attention to the day to day events, the significant dates, the festivals – to all that is relevant to the world of the family and the education of the child.

The achievements include the broadcasting of over 150 programmes; the public recognition of the importance of what we are doing; and the wide distribution of copies of our programmes.

The problems ... we have them all. Even public television companies worry about large audiences and we have to convince people every day of the need for social sector programmes that are not of wide interest but are still important. We have to continually negotiate with the television company, selling the project, resisting pressures to cut the costs, and so on. Another problem is that working with rural families with very small children takes time. For us there is little possibility of rehearsing and reshooting: it's like sitting an exam every week.

And, at last, the evaluation

Naturally evaluation starts with knowing where we started from, where we are, where we want to go and what means and people we can count on. We also evaluate ourselves in three stages:

evaluation by the team itself;

evaluation after having watched the Tuesday programme;

external evaluation of the programme.

Every Tuesday, after having watched the programme, the members of the television crew and the members of the Coordinating team of *Preescolar na Casa*, sit together to make a detailed analysis. Each member writes notes, then they discuss, criticise and come up with ideas to improve things. The PNC-TV then goes through a similar process on its own; and intends to undertake a constant action-research evaluation with the cooperation of everybody – the air flows more freely and the sun comes beaming in when the windows and doors are wide open.

Externally, the Spanish Ministry of Social Affairs has analysed many aspects of our programmes and their suggestions and recommendations were very valuable in showing us new ways of evaluation and analysis.

An end and a continuation

'Once upon a time there was a television programme named *Pre-escolar na Casa*'. Stories begin like that. Only this is not a story: it is a magnificent reality that goes on giving support and help to so many families in the fascinating task of bringing up and educating small children. ❑

Portugal: Mobile ECD in isolated communities

Isabel Cruz

Higher School of Education, University of the Algarve

This article describes a radical approach to the problems of rural life. It's an approach that doesn't just reach rural families, it starts inside family homes and builds out from there, inventing and redefining educational spaces and methodologies as it goes.

The Mobile Early Childhood Development project is run by the Foundation-supported *Instituto das Comunidades Educativas* (Institute of Educational Communities – ICE) in collaboration with its Isolated Schools Project. It also enjoys the close collaboration of the Portuguese Ministry of Education – which provides the early childhood educators – and has strong support from the village and town councils throughout the areas of Portugal in which it operates.

Many early childhood development (ECD) programmes in marginalised areas are now based on coordinated interventions that involve not only the children, but also the families, the neighbours and the community they belong to. In part, this is to counter what Nimnicht[1] describes as an "out of context approach to meeting the needs of children amounting to a kind of marginalisation in itself".

And here, in line with Jipson[2], the aim is to clarify the nature of the connections between culture, children and curriculum in the light of the cultural values and the expectations of the families involved. Nimnicht[1] adds that programmes should lead – through participation and involvement – to self-help and thus the development of self-confidence in families and communities.

Personal development

From this it is logical to say that a major function of professionals is to enable the development of all persons involved in the work. Paternalism and/or manipulation are thereby replaced by relationships that permit the participation of the whole community in an open and democratic way; and the aim is to ensure that families and communities can construct and control their own futures more effectively.

According to Powell[4], this gives rise to four crucial dimensions in intervention programmes for families with pre-school children.

First: the methodologies and content of the programme must be linked appropriately with the characteristics and the necessities of each individual family. dysfunction here hampers and discredits the programme.

> "We bet on this project. It is the engine of development of our village"
> (Town Councillor of the Office of Culture and Education of the Town Council of S. Brás de Alportel)

Second: educators and families must share decision making: democratic participation contributes to the development of the adult and has a positive influence on the establishment of the relationship between parents and children.

Third: the programme should focus on the balance between the parents' and the child's needs.

Fourth: planning should allow time for open discussions with the parents, both to allow them to learn and to confront them with new ideas.

below: community members share their skills with young children... in whatever local spaces are available

Against this background, ICE has developed the national project for Mobile Early Childhood Education to open up new educational spaces and new educational opportunities within remote communities. It is an action-research project where families and communities are also the subjects of the educational process and the producers of their own knowledge. In each area, the work is based on particular, local methodologies; and on the principle that the parents exert a determining influence on the education of their children – although they need specific support.

At the beginning of each school year semi-formal individual interviews take place with all families with children aged four and five. These are to obtain knowledge about the ideas parents have of ECD and also to obtain data about the children.

Afterwards, meetings are arranged with parents to explain the objectives of the project and to define together the strategies to be used in the future.

Building out from the home

Work itself starts with home visits by *animadoras* (enablers) who support and encourage families in relationships with their children; detect difficulties; identify achievements between visits; carry out activities with children; and plan and define the objectives for the next visit.

People are encouraged to visit each others' homes and so relationships are progressively developed. Joint outings and meetings add to this and it all helps to break down their geographical isolation and that imposed by life styles.

One effect is that the nearest neighbours voluntarily take on responsibilities in the community, offering to stay with the children when the parents are not at home, and to pass on information. This sort of action leads to the self-identification of new *animadoras* and leads on to the establishment of a network of support in the community itself.

As work proceeds *animadoras* form groups of children who have common interests and develop bodies of work around these interests. As Katz & Chard[5] point out, such an interest-based curricular approach – which is often characterised by project work – makes the activities exactly right for children; and leads to awareness of problems surrounding them by involving them in strategies that help them understand their own experiences. It also leads to coherence and continuity in their

activities; and this helps the development of cooperation within the groups.

Study visits are a feature of these curricula, and these include not only the children and the educators but also their closest relatives – parents, siblings and grandparents. The participation of the family enables them to appreciate the work done by the children and increases the family's competence to continue work on the activities that the children are engaged in during the project. This kind of family involvement in the development of the projects also has another importance: the topics dealt with are part of the cultural universe of the families; and it can extend the knowledge of the community.

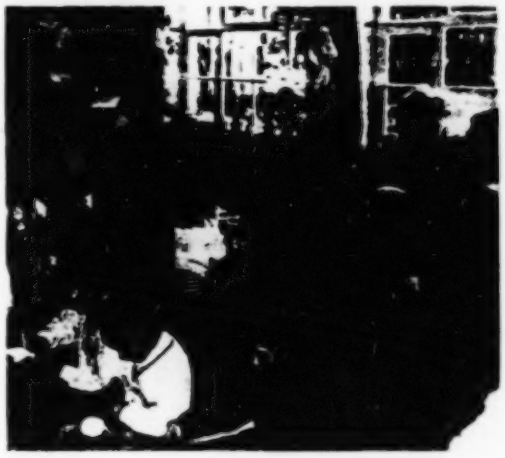
But this comprehensive approach also represents a challenge for the professionals: they are permanently confronted with situations that require creative and constructive solutions.

Links to schools

A great deal of importance is given to the relationship between the family and the kindergartens and elementary schools. According to Lightfoot[6], negativity and discord will occur when differences between school and family accentuate and intensify power and injustice in society. On the other hand, when there is a balance of power and responsibility between the family and the school and the role of the family is not rejected or diminished, there is a creative conflict. This leads to change and so to more constructive attitudes in both schools and parents.

Conclusions

As well as the implications for the development of rural communities, the project allows family members to develop autonomy, increase their self-esteem and adapt to the educational needs of the children. Important progress in the relationship between parents and children is clear; and parents develop a still greater confidence in helping their children in the beginning of their compulsory school-time. They also have a greater capacity to cooperate with the teachers in school activities. ❑



right: joint programmes and exchange visits plus community support keep remote rural pre- and primary schools viable

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Reaching rural families

South Africa: ECD in broad context

Lionel Berman

For almost all of its history 'educare' (a South African term for education and care) has been centre-based, with training mostly in towns and cities to which the rural trainees travel from their villages. This has given rise to many problems, including: trainees who, remote from their own environments, receive inappropriate training; trainers who know nothing of trainees' real circumstances and needs; and communities that are excluded from the training and that therefore resist the implementation of programmes when the trainees return.

All of these problems alienate communities from the educare process and largely account for its failure to create a sustainable system; and to anchor itself in the community. Added to this is the fact that the vast majority of children under the age of six in South Africa are not in centres.

Nor do the communities see educare as a priority: in the rural communities, basic needs such as jobs, the production of food, clean water and the availability of electricity far surpass the need for pre-schools. This is not to view economically deprived people as driven by a pre-determined hierarchy of needs, as Richter (1993) points out:

> In truth, all these needs operate simultaneously in human beings, and life is lived by people who synchronously exercise their psychological, social and physical capacities.*

Thus educare must be seen as part of the entire developmental programme and process.

Given this background, the Learning for All Trust has always taken its workshops to the communities: the facilitators live there and run the workshops there. Also, workshops are aimed at parents and caregivers as well as teachers in the pre-schools. In this way communities can articulate their needs and the facilitators have to address developmental issues broadly if any impact is to be made in the

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educare arena. Issues like water, food, electricity, community structures, administration, financial management and project management are important priorities alongside education – and, in particular, early childhood development. Added to this are the needs of the vast majority of children who are not in centres: they too, must receive care and education. Education and care become placed firmly in the community's hands through this approach.

The way forward then is to facilitate the development of a broad spectrum of skills that include food growing, administrative skills, creation of democratic structures, formation of associations, primary health care, financial skills and budgeting, and women's issues.

above: overcoming remoteness through community cooperation – mothers taking responsibility for ECD activities

Workshops addressing these issues aim at empowering the participants and the community in general and facilitate access to expertise in the various areas of interest.

In addition, we draw people from the community to be 'stewards' – rural educare workers. The concept of stewards owes much to the health sector's concept of the 'barefoot doctor' – a para-professional who moves among the community giving primary health care and advice that will help to improve the general health of the community. We are devising basic behaviours that would assist the parents and caregivers to provide a stimulating and participative environment for the children in their care – for example: 'Tell your children traditional stories' – as well as change attitudes towards children – for example: 'Listen to your children – what they have to say is valid'.

These stewards are, for economic reasons, all volunteers working in their spare time from full time jobs. They move around their own community, giving advice, listening to problems and networking the caregivers in the area so that problems can be dealt with by using the resources within the community.

Besides the stewards we have established 'Learning for All Care Clubs' for caregivers – parents, grandparents, older siblings or day-care mothers. These are primarily centred around financial issues and function as credit unions with the assistance of the Savings and Credit Union Co-operative League of South Africa. They also produce saleable commodities to provide some support for women suffering from the effects of the high unemployment rate. Club meetings also regularly include discussions around child rearing and intellectual stimulation of pre-school children.

Finally, all of our projects have facilitated the establishment of food gardens and these provide children with food both at home and in the centres.

The realisation that families in communities cannot be reached on the traditional educare ticket is something that the early childhood development community is going to have to face. Huge amounts of money and time are being invested in establishing centres that only reach a very small number of families. It is time that the needs of the communities were addressed rather than those of the training agencies and funders who set the agendas now. The Learning for All approach is an alternative that is related to how communities function – although we do not have all the answers.

One thing of which we are sure is that a totally integrated approach must be followed if we are to facilitate capacity building in communities and, in so doing reach all children. ❑

* Richter, L. (1993). 'Many Kinds of Deprivation: Young Children and Their Families in South Africa' in Eldering, L. and Leseman, P. (eds). *Early Intervention and Culture. Preparation for Literacy. The Interface between Theory and Practice*. (1993). UNESCO/ Netherlands Committee for UNESCO, Paris. ISBN 92-3-102937-1

A personal story

Minah Sebothoma lives in the Northern Transvaal Province in a village of about 200 inhabitants called Vianen. She runs the pre-school for the village. There are 34 children whose parents pay 5 South African Rand per child per month (about US$ 1.50). This SAR 170 per month is supplemented by SAR 30 per month by the community, when they can manage it. From the total she must provide equipment and draw a salary. The children bring their own meals from home.

It is 121km north from Pietersburg, and the last 18km are a nightmare: the road is almost impassable. The car slews across the sandbanks which turn into thick mud when (and if) it rains. The ridge in the middle of the road is so high that a vehicle cannot drive over it. No taxis travel this route and there are only two lines on telephone poles.

There is no electricity and just one privately owned water hole in Vianen. Villagers have to walk 20 minutes to a stream which is shared by the animals. The closest telephone is at the Primary School, a 15 minute walk away. The High School is a one hour walk away. The closest clinic is in Schoongezicht, a drive of half an hour ... if there is transport.

This story is not unusual: it is typical of the majority of the teachers that we train in the northern parts of South Africa. Their average salary is R90 per month (about US $25).

Peru: the development of rural children

Dr César Vigo Vargas, Co-ordinator, National Non-formal Education Project

The rural sector of Peru is made up of a heterogenous collection of different social groups, languages, cultures, forms of economic organisation, and so on. It includes indigenous peoples, the small farming communities of the Andes, and the labourers and peasant farmers of the costal region. This article concentrates on mountain people.

For some years, land has been divided up and sold off, while more modern farming methods have come in. The result is a series of contrasts, for example: between land owners and suppliers of cheap manual labour; between producers with different levels of efficiency and therefore incomes, and communal farmers with different levels of available technology; and between the educated and the non-educated.

The principles which direct thought and practice

1. Develop alternatives for the development of young children through interactions between the main educational agents (for example, parents) and other social agents.

2. Regard mothers as both instigators of self-education, and as central agents in holistic child development.

3. Demand real participation by families and community members so responsibilities are accepted, and the role of families and communities is maximised.

4. Guarantee integration of all services to ensure healthy and holistic development.

5. Adopt the concept of non-formal, continuing education.

6. Emphasise prevention and eliminate or reduce risks for children.

7. Recognise the value of local cultural norms and find ways of rescuing and enriching them.

National and local cultures

Our approach used to be determined by the ideas of the dominant national culture and ideology, and consequently set out to 'improve these people'. We did not offer a democratic alternative, based on understanding how the 'Andinos' came to be how they are, how the dominant society came to be how it is, and how to establish relations between the two.

Development programmes for children, families and communities have to understand and value the knowledge and practice of the socialisation of children that each community has. Moreover, it must be within an intercultural dialogue in which the particularities of practices and beliefs are those of each cultural tradition. This means eradicating abstract concepts such as 'the Peruvian child'.

Strategies

The programme uses action-research, building up innovations by understanding and learning from the principal educational agents:

- the mothers;
- the para-professional *animadora* (enabler) elected by the community;
- the professional teacher/coordinators who promote, plan, execute and evaluate the programmes.

Once the professionals and academics who have the responsibility for explaining it scientifically, formalising curricula and so on have incorporated it into the work, it is returned to its owners. It is also offered for possible adaption and replication in similar situations elsewhere.

Operational model

Together with the communities, we have identified a number of viable alternatives for work. From these we have established three models:

1. weekly home visits in which an *animadora* develops early childhood development activities with children's normal caregivers;
2. workshops in family or community houses, in which an *animadora* and small groups of mothers and children work together;
3. A version of the 'Child-to-child' approach in which older children help to stimulate children up to three years old.

Lines of action

The broad lines of action are those associated with supporting and developing the family and community; and with multisectoral coordination.

The work is concerned with validating and strengthening the educative role of mothers, families and communities in such a way that they don't just look after their own children, they look after all the children of the community. The programme supports this by providing continuing education through community workshops, and through radio and television programmes.

Multisectoral coordination brings together all the governmental and non governmental agencies that operate with the same populations. As well as the obvious efficiency that this produces, it makes sure that services are focused on the groups most at risk, while producing effective policies for children.

The principle axes of the work

Three principle axes have emerged for children. The first is about identity and autonomy: 'who I am', and is centred in knowledge about the body, its possibilities for movement and action, the satisfying of its basic needs and so on. It responds to the need to know about oneself: name, gender, family and so on; and builds on the concept of gradually accumulating more information.

The second axis is about children discovering their physical and social environment – the world of the family and other adults, animals, plants, objects and country. This is the world that children grow into, gathering experiences in their relations with other children and in other environments in the community.

The third axis is about communication and representation. It cuts across the others and becomes more important: rural children are left with deficits that will later influence their ability to learn orally, read, write and develop intellectual processes.

Colombia: communities helping themselves

By: Luz Mary Franco, Luz Enith Valencia, Clara Inés Ríos, Amparo Hernández, Lucero Matabajoy, María Cortez, Sandra Patricia Guarín and María Teresa Matijasevic Arcila

This article brings together the experiences of the educators of the *Proyecto Rural Familia y Niñez* (Rural Family and Childhood Project) in remote communities in rural Colombia; and the thoughts of María Teresa Matijasevic Arcila who, as coordinator of the project, decided to enable the educators to write this article for themselves.

For the past two years, in nine communities, the educators have been implementing the project, the aim of which is to help families achieve better relationships and to support the well-being of children from before birth to seven years. The project comes from a collaboration between the *Fundación para la estimulación adecuada del niño con proyección comunitaria* (FESCO – the Foundation For Child Development with Community Support) the *Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar* (ICBF – the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare) and the Bernard van Leer Foundation. ICBF supplies resources but these are under the control of people from the communities, as are the educational activities.

The views of the educators and the coordinator combine to offer direct insights into the work, and also give the feel of an evolving project as it builds the capacities of both the workers and the families.

The Coordinator's story

As I reflected on writing something about our project, it seemed to me that it would be much more interesting to share this with the educators so they could develop new skills. It has been a very enriching experience for me personally to hear their stories and then realise the ease with which one can form stereotypes about people and communities. More than anything else, their perceptions of the region surprised me, as did the relative ease with which they were able to express themselves.

To produce the article, we formed a representative group of educators – one from each community – and held a meeting to decide which aspects of the work the article should be about. To make it easy for everyone to express their ideas and experiences, we started with an informal discussion about a number of themes, and this was recorded and later transcribed. During this meeting, each of the educators committed herself to writing about one particular aspect of the project.

Once we had a transcript of the meeting, the educators added some material and we produced an outline. After this, each educator began the job of filling out her story.

The owners of the knowledge

When this was finished, we read it and made various modifications. Then, at the suggestion of one of the educators, each took it back to her village to share it with her fellows so that they could add to it or suggest changes.

When they came to evaluate the whole activity, they recognised the importance of telling people about the project to share it with others who have similar interests and objectives.

For my part, I consider this a very valuable experience, not only because it helps people to learn about the project, but also because it opens up the possibility of developing other communication skills in the educators.

A valuable new space

This has been a valuable process because it has created a space for the exchange of opinions, experiences and perceptions; and for sharing activities, characteristics of families and both community and personal achievements.

My job was motivating them to express themselves openly, and stimulating them to confront and reflect on their opinions. They continued to work like this until they felt more sure of themselves and were clear about the way of working. At this point, they suggested that they continue without my help – and did so without any difficulty.

The Educators' stories

How we work

To start with, in each village, an association of parents is formed. This chooses members of the community to be Educators who will be responsible for the local Community House and for offering educational activities to the families of the village.

We have special ICBF houses which are for community use but ours are different from those in other communities: they are for pregnant mothers, children up to seven years and families. We also visit families, and have sessions with children and with their parents.

Who we work with

Families have few resources – enough to live on but no more. Most families have both parents and between three and five children. Few of the parents completed primary school but they are very determined that their children should have a good education.

Before the project started, the parents were a bit aggressive with their children and didn't devote enough time to them. As a result, children showed aggressiveness, timidity and poor langauge development.

Our work with children

Working sessions are held twice a week in the afternoon. We have educational and recreational activities such as songs, games, cutting out with scissors, scribbling, painting and so on. These activities are planned beforehand. We have them to help the development of the children and to prepare them for school. They also offer children the opportunity to socialise so they can explore and develop their creativity and imagination, and feel the freedom to do what they want to do.

Our family visits

Family visits are organised twice a week for pregnant mothers, children less than two years old, and the families of the children who attend the sessions in the Community House. During the visits we provide support and help according to the needs that mothers, children and families have.

We teach pregnant mothers about: the risk factors in pregnancy and the precautions they must take; breastfeeding; preparing for the birth; and stimulating their babies. We offer families with very young children guidelines about building good relationships with their children, stimulating them and protecting their health.

When we work with the families of the children who attend the sessions at the Community House we concentrate on the behaviour that their children have shown, trying to investigate the causes of that behaviour. We also show the sorts of activities that we do at the centre so the parents can continue at home; and we offer them guidance about the particular problems and circumstances that each family has.

Our experience, credibility and achievements

At first we had some difficulties because we didn't have much experience; and sometimes we lacked credibility with the parents. But this has changed now that we are trained and prepared.

The major achievements of the project include parents dedicating more time to their children, listening to them and understanding them better. The result is that the children have more freedom and confidence; enjoy their play more; and, because they have friends, have learned to share. In addition, there is now less abuse and maltreatment of children.

Pregnant mothers have learned to stimulate their babies from before birth; have regular ante-natal checkups; prepare for delivery, post delivery and breastfeeding; are aware of the psychological risks; and know how to care for the newly born.

Our sessions with parents

Sessions with parents are held once a month and deal with various themes that the parents choose themselves. But the sessions are even more important than that because the parents have the chance to talk about their doubts and uncertainties, and to express their own opinions and share them with others.

The training that we have received from FESCO and ICBF has helped us to prepare ourselves for educating the children and families that use the centre. The themes that we cover include: child development; sex education; family relationships; and educational activities. FESCO and ICBF also give us advice during visits to the Community House.

Our personal development

Personally, we are changed people. For example, we express ourselves better and have overcome our timidity. We also relate much better to our communities and they automatically include us in whatever activity or meeting they have. Also the families we work with value us much more.

Finally, we feel very happy to be developing this project in our own communities, and to be able to support the education of the families and the development of the children.

Wales: discovering the needs

These notes were prepared by workers of the Powys Project of Save the Children UK (a non-governmental organisation), and outlines an approach to work in the seventh largest county (province) in England and Wales – but which has the sparsest population.

The findings of 'Swings and Roundabouts' – a seminal report*

- isolated mothers with limited contact with others
- children remote from others of their own age
- unequal availability of pre-school facilities
- transport expensive and inadequate
- services centralised and therefore hard to access
- poor advertising of resources leading to poor uptake
- under-fives' services uncoordinated and of low priority
- policy makers and service providers marginalised and disadvantaged by national policies and resource allocations
- lack of mechanisms for communication within and across agencies

**Swings and roundabouts: the highs and lows of life for pre-school children and their families in rural Powys*, 1992, Save the Children UK.

The response: the Powys Project

Built on:

- consultation with all involved;
- partnership between SCF(UK) and Powys Social Services (the main statutory service provider);
- promoting and strengthening existing services and their infrastructures rather than introducing a new service;
- developments grounded within the community and statutory providers to aid long term sustainability;
- small grants to key community organisations to develop and enhance their services – and enable them to demonstrate the value of their work to statutory agencies.

A key element: Area Audits

'Area Audits' means identifying needs at local level, then influencing planning processes through partnerships and joint operations between all those working in the field.

But the sparse population makes this hard work. The solution is working dynamically within social service teams to carry it out.

In practice, this means gathering and disseminating information on children's services. Then, using this as a spring board, identifying needs and establishing local working groups to develop facilities and services to meet those needs.

Coordinating groups oversee ongoing developments and act as local planning forums. These feed into county planning groups ensuring that local issues are both raised and addressed in central planning.

Tangible results of the Area Audits

A funding bid for a family support project to develop its services to reach a wider range of children, rather than developing a new centralised family centre.

The extension of an existing toy library into a mobile facility.

The publication of a Children's Services Information booklet with technical production undertaken by the local high school.

The establishment of a Play Work Foundation Course for those interested in school aged children.

An After School Club for children aged 4-11 years.

A child care information event to raise the profile of pre-school groups, childminders, and so on.

Network news

China: establishing links with New Zealand

Three early childhood specialists from New Zealand visited the People's Republic of China in March-April 1994. The purpose of their visit was to establish links in early childhood between the two countries. One of the projects that the specialists visited was an early childhood centre run by the Hebei Province Project which works to improve pre-school education in rural areas and to encourage parents' participation in their children's education. The New Zealanders found the use of music and rhythm in work done with young children of special interest, while the Chinese found the flexible approach of the New Zealanders to early education interesting. One of the three specialists was a former director of the *Anau Ako Pasifika* project in New Zealand that works with children of Pacific Island descent. A return visit by Chinese specialists will be made to New Zealand later this year.

India: 'the backbone of meaningful programmes'

In Madras, October 1994, a seminar was held entitled 'Policy for the young child in Tamil Nadu'. The seminar was a first step in reviewing and constructively criticising existing policies on children and women. Furthermore, the participants involved hope that the seminar will be the first initiative in establishing a dialogue with policy makers. A publication has been produced by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation based on the seminar entitled *Policy for the young child in Tamil Nadu*. It gives information on existing policies, issues in implementing child care services, the role of NGOs, new directions in child welfare, and recommendations. The seminar was jointly organised by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation – which with Foundation support runs the Children on the Agenda project – and the Professional Social Workers' Forum. The seminar also received financial support from the Foundation.

Israel: East Jerusalem case study

The East Jerusalem project, which works with Palestinian families and children to implement a comprehensive approach to community development and child and family education, has produced a case study of its work and achievements. Interestingly, the study found that home visiting programmes have less of an impact on families than other programmes such as pre-school centre activities. Because of this finding the project is thinking about reducing the duration of home visiting which is currently three years; developing approaches that allow families more choice in what programmes and services to participate in; and designing materials for parents to use at home with their children. The case study also found that a significant number of families are managed by older children rather than by parents. These families need specific services which equip the children with relevant skills. Further information on the case study can be obtained from the Trust of Programmes for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education, P.O. Box 20345, Jerusalem, Israel. Tel: 972.2.272811, Fax: 972.2.271910.

Italy: families helping families

The Foundation has recently begun supporting the Resource Families Project which operates in five regions in southern Italy. It seeks to establish community support networks around families facing multiple disadvantage. The support networks consist of volunteer families, who devise and implement their activities in close cooperation with existing statutory services in the fields of child welfare, family support, health and education. This cooperation triggers discussions about the operational principles of services and leads to the design of new working styles of the statutory services. The project is coordinated and monitored by an inter-regional working group with representatives of policy making bodies of the participating regions. A first seminar of the inter-regional working group was held in December 1994.

Morocco: a study day

The Ministry of Education recently created the Directorate of Pre-school Education to be responsible for overseeing both pre-school education and the first year of primary school. The Directorate organised a study day in January in order to evaluate pre-school activities in the Koranic Pre-schools Project over the last four years, and to gather recommendations on its future course. An exhibition of learning materials for young children was on permanent display. People from seven districts were invited, including teachers, practitioners, supervisors, trainers and trainees, and delegates from regional statutory bodies. Both the Koranic Pre-schools Project and the Atfale Project play a significant role in the area of early childhood development in the country, and had a large input into the study day. The day was deemed by all participants and the Directorate to be a success.

Morocco: project resources

The Koranic Pre-schools project has recently produced three books. The first is a history of the project, which trains pre-school teachers and runs local resource centres for early childhood development, and an explanation of its principles, theoretical development and resulting methodologies. The

second is a teachers' guide that suggests useful activities for working with children, ways of working in a classroom, advice on children's health and hygiene, and ideas on learning through play. The last book – produced in cooperation with the Atfale Project, the Mohammed V University and the Department of Primary Education – is a collection of traditional songs which can be played on simple instruments to accompany children singing. The songs employ different rhythms and stimulate musical and rhythmic development in children. All these books are in Arabic. More information about these resources can be obtained from: Ministère de l'Education Nationale, Rabat, Morocco. Tel: 212.7.771972, Fax: 212.7.771933.

Peru: an international symposium

From 28 November to 2 December the second of a series of symposia – the *Symposio Latinoamericano sobre Programas para la Infancia* (Symposium on early childhood programmes) – was organised by the Ministry of Education in Peru on family and community participation in the development of children under six years. The Ministry runs the National Non-Formal Education Programme with Foundation support. An estimated 2,200 people working in projects and academic institutions will benefit from the findings. Though most participants came from Latin American countries, representatives also came from Chad, Canada and the USA. Representatives from other Foundation-supported projects in the region were also present. Participants arrived at a set of conclusions which they hope to incorporate into their work. These included: coordination across institutions to share successful strategies; the alignment of public and private social services to operate within national development strategies; and the recommendation that community leaders form a vital part of programme operations in order to ensure quality, continuity and effectiveness. The next symposium in this series will be held in Costa Rica in September 1995.

The project also produces a newsletter entitled *Creciendo hasta 6* (Growing up till 6) in Spanish which includes articles about children's health, the role of parents, sanitation, toys and so on. Information about this newsletter can be obtained from: *Revista de Promoción Educativa de Proyecto Van Leer*, Jr. Van de Velde 160, Lima 41, Peru.

Spain: conference on young children

Barcelona was the venue for an international conference held in November 1994: the *Congreso de infancia* (the congress on infancy). Organised by the *Asociación de Mestres Rosa Sensat* (the Rosa Sensat Teachers' Association) and the Catalan and Spanish magazines *Infància* and *Infancia* (Infancy), it was a national conference to discuss the care and education of children aged 0-6. The 600 participants came from universities, social services, governmental and non-governmental organisations, and international organisations from other European countries. Topics under discussion included childhood and services, the relations between families and services, childhood and diversity, infants and their environment. Among the projects supported by the Foundation that were present, the *Context Infancia* project, situated in Barcelona, was heavily involved in the organisation of the conference. The *Capitulaciones 92* and *Preescolar Na Casa* projects from Spain and the *Verein zur Förderung ausländischer und deutscher Kinder e.V.* (VAK) project from Berlin, Germany also attended.

Turkey: *Womenews*

The Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (FSWW) in Istanbul, which runs the *Geçekondu* Children's Project, has begun publishing a quarterly English language newsletter. The first issue appeared in December 1994. The FSWW aims to support women from low-income urban areas to become economically independent and improve the quality of their lives, and therefore that of their children. *Womenews* focuses on FSWW's activities, gives information on child development and rearing, and reports on events. The *Geçekondu* Children's Project trains mothers from *geçekondus* – or squatter areas – to become para-professionals working with other mothers and their children at home. The project is also planning to develop a pre-school curriculum in partnership with the parents that is set specifically in the *geçekondu* context. Information about *Womenews* and the project is available from: The Foundation for the Support of Women's Work, Galipdede Cad. 149/4, Beyoglu 80030, Istanbul, Turkey. Tel: 90.212.2490700, Fax: 90.212.2491508.

UK: an early years forum in Scotland

The Foundation-supported Scottish Network convened two meetings in October and December 1994 attended by representatives of voluntary groups from all parts of the Scottish mainland and from the Scottish Islands. The aim of the meetings was to work out a comprehensive voluntary sector response to the British Government's Children Act. The Act requires partnership between statutory and voluntary organisations that work with children. At the meetings, ways of establishing a Scottish Early Years Voluntary Sector Network were explored. This would have a brief to advocate strategies to meet the needs of the voluntary sector in work with children under eight. Subsequent activities have included gathering information and seeking advice from all parts of the very diverse childcare network throughout Scotland; with the general objective of ensuring that the voluntary sector is well placed to work within the scope of the Children Act and the ensuing reorganisation of the local authorities for the benefit of young children in Scotland. ❑

Erratum

In the last Newsletter, January 1995 (number 77) page 14, we wrote that the Arab Resource Collective had organised a regional workshop on 'Partnership for Better Parenthood' in Cyprus for participants from the Maghreb countries. In fact, the workshop was on 'Partnership for Better Childhood' and it mainly included participants from Arab countries. We apologise for this mistake.

Dear Reader,

According to our research, there is a very high probability that you will share the contents of this article with a colleague. We also know that you are likely to be involved in teaching and training; that you have a 59 per cent chance of being aged between 31 and 50; and that children's development is almost certainly the Newsletter topic that is of most interest to you.

We know all this because some 1,500 readers returned the questionnaires that we mailed in June 1994, and we have now analysed those that arrived within eight weeks – a total of 1,008.

This is an excellent response rate (some 3,700 questionnaires were mailed), due perhaps to the fact that readers expect something in return. Indeed, our respondents want to continue receiving the Newsletter because they have confidence in it, they believe what they read in it, and it is important for their work. What is more, they pass it on to others to read, they discuss the contents with colleagues, they use it for training, and so on.

We have been very impressed by the care with which readers replied to the various questions. We designed the questionnaire in such a way that it would be difficult to simply answer 'yes' or 'no' to every question, and it was very obvious that a good deal of thought went into the responses.

In this article we are sharing with you a few highlights from our findings, as well as some of our thoughts for the Newsletter's future.

Who are the Newsletter readers?

Readers' ages

age	percentage
21-30	7
31-40	24
41-50	35
51-60	22
over 60	12

Our respondents came from no less than 88 countries with a preponderance, not surprisingly, from English-speaking countries and from Europe. They are rather well educated with 80 per cent having a first or second degree. Average ages are reasonably high, as can be seen from the table.

Many of you hold down more than one job, and your jobs involve different kinds of tasks. By asking two questions, one about occupation and one about work, and by giving different sets of alternatives, we have come up with the following groupings. Please note that the figures add up to much more than the 1,008 respondents because of the multiple tasks/jobs:

396 are involved in teaching and training

375 work with or for a non-governmental organisation

363 described their occupation as 'administrator/ manager'

333 work 'in the field' (EC centre, health/community worker etc.)

174 work with or for a foundation or charity

130 are involved in government of some form

44 work in or with international organisations

Reading habits

We were very pleased to discover that recipients of the Newsletter actually read it! A quarter of respondents say that they read all of it, with 81 per cent claiming to read half or more. The most popular section is the theme article: always read by 65 per cent and sometimes read by 22 per cent.

But what do you do after you have read the Newsletter? Only 29 of you tell us that you throw it away after reading, the remainder find some very good uses for it. In particular, it gets passed around colleagues, it is used for teaching and training, and it is placed in libraries and resource centres.

We have calculated from the 940 responses to the question that specifically asked 'how many people, in addition to yourself, usually read your copy of the Newsletter?' that each Newsletter is read by an average of four people.

What actions do you take?

Another question asked what actions readers have taken as a result of reading the Newsletter. Seven possibilities were given and readers were asked if they had done this often, once or twice, or never. 878 respondents (87 per cent) had taken some form of action, many of them more than one:

804 have shared information/ideas with colleagues

616 have used an article for teaching/training/ discussion

548 have introduced ideas/methods into their work

492 have ordered a book or materials

424 have contacted a project or organisation for information

383 have contacted the Foundation for information

130 have translated an article into the local language

What are your interests?

We gave a list of eight topics that are covered in the Newsletter and asked you to say which you found most of interest, sometimes of interest or least of interest. The responses are shown in the table and it can be seen that all the topics engender great interest, with the lowest total

interest recorded at just over half the respondents (56 per cent). However, there are obvious preferences: children's development comes at the very top of the list and is closely followed by parental/community involvement and training.

What do you think about the Newsletter?

Which topics are of most or least interest to you? (percentages)

Topic	most interesting	sometimes of interest	total interest
Children's development	73	17	90
Parental/community involvement	65	20	85
Training	54	30	84
Multicultural issues	46	33	79
Evaluation	50	27	77
Health/nutrition	39	34	73
Gender roles	33	37	70
Language/literacy	32	36	68
Costs/effects of ECD	32	33	65
Para-professionals	25	38	63
Teenage parenting	22	35	57
Home visiting	23	33	56

We also asked for your opinions about the Newsletter. We gave 14 statements and asked you to indicate your agreement or disagreement with each one on a five point scale.

In all cases, there were definite preferences expressed in that agreement strongly outweighed disagreement, or vice versa as the case may be. Not all respondents answered all parts of this question, but a total of 903 readers answered at least one part of it. In summary, we see that there are seven statements that are agreed to by more than half of our total respondents (numbers in brackets indicate agreement).

- I have confidence in the information in the Newsletter (780)
- I enjoy reading articles that challenge my views (752)
- The Newsletter is one of a number of important sources of information for me (746)
- Articles are not written in very difficult language (719)
- I'd like more articles describing experiences of projects (631)
- The layout of the Newsletter is not boring (588)
- Bibliographies are of interest to me (557)

Majority opinions about the other seven statements were:

- The Newsletter is extremely important for my work (485)
- I would like more articles on capacity building/training (456)
- There is not too much emphasis on the Bernard van Leer Foundation (434)
- I would like articles that are more analytical (427)
- Articles should not be longer or contain more details (406)
- The Resources section should be expanded (379)
- There should not be more photos and illustrations (326)

Changing the Newsletter

So what do we intend to do with the Newsletter? Our first conclusion is that the majority of our readers are basically satisfied with it and that no radical changes are needed. In fact, several respondents were emphatic that it should remain just as it is.

We intend to continue to publish the Newsletter four times a year. The content will continue to focus on young children and we will pay special attention to children's development, to experiences of projects and programmes, and to capacity building/training. Parental and community involvement is a topic that has run through almost every article, and we hope to keep it that way.

One innovation will be a name. Quite a lot of suggestions were made for a name, none of them quite what we were looking for, but we are continuing to search for the right one. We also intend to make some changes to the design and layout, but they will not be too radical, and will probably be introduced in the early part of 1996.

The Newsletter cannot cover every aspect of early childhood development in depth but we would like to remind you that the Foundation publishes a number of books and papers which might be of use to you. We enclose a publications list with the Newsletter once each year (the last one was in the January 1995 issue), and we advertise new publications in the Newsletter.

Can you help us?

In October 1990 we reported on a first reader survey in Newsletter 60 and it is worth repeating some of the remarks we made then. First, to say that we do welcome your suggestions, your letters and your contributions. Please be critical and constructive – don't wait for someone else to do it, give other readers the benefit of your experiences.

And second, if you find the Newsletter useful and interesting then other people working in the same field would do so as well. Please pass on your copy to colleagues when you can, and if you know of others who would like to receive their own copy, send us the names and addresses and we will do the rest. The Foundation is limited in the number of projects it is able to support and also in the countries where it works. But we are able to send our publications anywhere and we are prepared to send them free of charge to people and organisations that have a real interest.

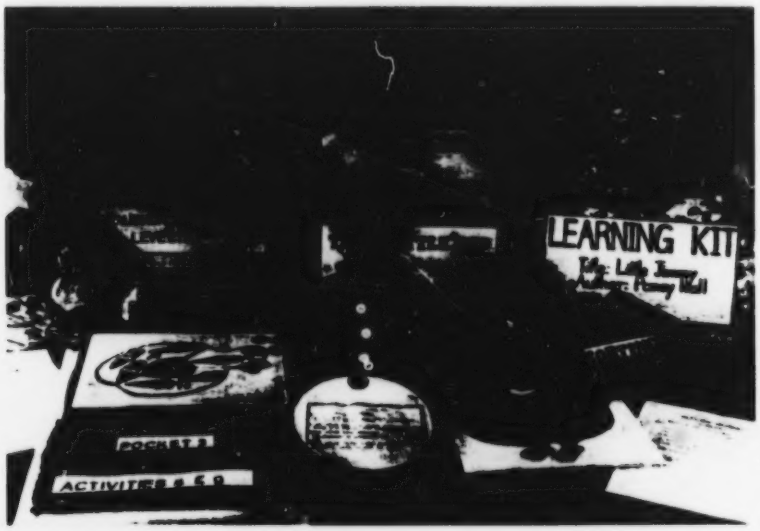
And finally

We would like to say a very big thank you to everyone who returned the questionnaire. We wish you much success in your work, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Ruth Cohen, Jim Smale, Joanna Bouma
Communications Section

Report from the field

Jamaica: working hard to raise awareness



above: examples of some of the attractive learning kits made with waste materials

We have been very busy over the past year disseminating our materials and know-how, and advocating on behalf of Jamaica's young children to a wide audience including the general public, those in the educational, health or child care fields, businesses, the media and so on. We are doing this through a launch of the materials and a 'Roving Exposition'. We are also reaching people through letters, personal contacts, and follow-up telephone contact. Though reaching people is hard work, once we had actually started, we found that we had set a process in motion.

Letting people know

A recent example is that in early December 1994 we hosted a very successful launch in the capital, Kingston, of the materials that we had developed. The launch was held in order to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood development, and the work of the North Coast Project. We invited people from the business world, from all sorts of organisations, educators and parents. Over 100 people came to the launch. The Minister of Education, Youth and Culture was the Guest Speaker at the function, and he also launched the material. His involvement attracted a heavy media presence and we have since benefited from the publicity in the general media and radio. We also hope through events like these to raise the funds to reproduce our materials for wider dissemination. These materials include books and instructional videos for teacher training; manuals for teachers working with children, parents, and community members; and books for children.

We also held a 'Roving Exposition' between December and January. This was held in four locations on four different dates – the materials and staff members travelling between each location. In this way we were able to reach people living all over Jamaica who were able to see and order materials, and discuss early childhood development. The exposition ended in Kingston on 12 January 1995.

Learning kits

Apart from the dissemination and advocacy work that we are doing, we are also very busy preparing, distributing and evaluating learning kits that we have produced. These are packaged learning materials designed for loan to parents. The original idea of these kits came as a means of meeting the needs of parents who said that they wanted to work with their children at home, but did not know how to do so. Some teachers experimented with making the learning kits during the second phase of the Project. They were further developed by teachers and Resource Centre Officers at selected Resource Centres during the final phase.

Each learning kit contains a letter to the caregiver or parent explaining its objective. A list of suggested activities for using the materials in the kit is included, a checklist to be completed by the caregiver, and everything that the children need to carry out the activities. For example, paper and crayons, and scrap materials with accompanying hints on using them to make toys are contained in the kits. Each kit is easy to use and inexpensive to put together. The contents – designed mainly from discarded materials – are packaged in boxes, or cases made for the purpose. The ideas, therefore, can be easily copied by the caregiver.

The learning kits focus on skills and concepts appropriate for young children and cover three levels of difficulty: level one – for the most inexperienced child (probably a three year old); level two – for the more advanced child; and level three – for the most advanced child in the Basic School (approximately five years old).

We also suggest that the adult user complete the checklist and return it with the kit to the child's teacher after use so that the teacher can measure the child's progress.

In order to test them, we initially gave the learning kits to small groups of teachers to use with the children in their care. As they were so successful we developed a system where parents, teachers and schools can borrow them from libraries or schools. The fact that parents often request to borrow them to use at home with their children is very pleasing – it shows that their involvement in and understanding of their children's development is increasing.

Our project may be drawing to a close, but there is a lot of work still to be done for Jamaica's young children that will keep us busy for a long time. ❑

The North Coast project, which the Foundation has been supporting since 1988, is now drawing to a close. The project was involved in training teachers for Jamaica's Basic Schools, and producing training manuals for these teachers; developing a curriculum and materials for use with three year olds; and evaluating the impact of these activities and materials on young children and on the effectiveness of the teachers. This article is based on an interview with Project Director, Myrtle Daley.

Outdoor environments: planning for challenge

Jimi Jolley

Jimi Jolley is an independent consultant who helps communities to design and produce low cost, yet developmentally appropriate, outdoor environments for their children using locally available materials. In this article he discusses the reasons for his interest in the work and offers some examples of how to develop successful ideas for good outdoor environments for young children. Information on Jimi Jolley's services and on creating outdoor environments can be obtained from: Jimi Jolley, 10506 B Golden Meadow Drive, Austin 78758, Texas, USA.

I've visited many child care facilities throughout the world. I've often found that though caregivers wish to create an environment where children can grow and develop to their full potential, they only provide a wide variety of activities and spaces indoors.

Inside, children interact with their environment, peers and caregivers to experience language, problem solving, creativity, social interaction, self-awareness, coordination, and motor ability, through materials such as books, blocks, puzzles, clay, and waste.

But once outside, it is assumed that children only want and need to run and climb; as if other forms of development can be ignored.

Why is the inside environment treated as the most valid place for learning? Can experience – and thus learning – be separated so that valid learning only happens inside? Do children stop learning once outside?

Young children need spaces that provide a broad range of activities, experiences, skills, ideas and conditions. Designing outdoor environments for young children has to provide for more than just their physical and motor development.

The rationale

Piaget has defined four domains of development (learning) in the child. These encompass the physical, cognitive, social and emotional. He states that, even though they can be defined separately, they do not exist in isolation – each event that takes place in one domain affects the others.

Outdoor environments that keep this in mind usually feature a variety of spaces in which a wide range of activities is possible. They include a balance of light and shade, warm and cool places, the natural and the constructed, open and enclosed, fixed and moveable, active and passive, flat and inclined, smooth and textured, individual and group.

And, whether they are natural or created, such environments will allow for flexibility, and cater to children's different development levels making both the child and the caregiver more independent; will provide challenging opportunities for children to grow and develop; will offer young children the opportunities they need to try new skills; and, as they encounter elements in their environment which are beyond their current abilities, will help them to gain the confidence and competence to move beyond these limits.

Such environments enable children to reach that stage of excitement and confidence that says 'Look what I can do!'. They do this by providing a world in which children can do the unexpected, the experimental and the adventurous. Where they can climb, balance, swing, move, run, dig, build, explore, observe, create, and invent ... all the things that will help them develop into complete human beings.

Two practical examples

Even something that seems as simple as swinging on a rope suspended from a tree can take on added dimensions when we explore and understand the variety and complexity of this activity which develops upper body strength and lower body coordination. Depending on how we structure the placement and design of swings, they can be instruments of independence or of social cooperation and interaction; and can develop children's perspective of how the world is viewed, their sense of position in it, and their sense of balance.

In the same way, an activity like riding wheeled vehicles has many dimensions because, once children have managed the physical mechanics of getting the vehicle in motion, they want to do more than just ride back and forth on a straight, flat surface.

If they have the necessary props and spaces, children will use vehicles for all types of behaviour: physical actions; cooperative play; group interactions; for dramatic play; and to lead them to other areas of their environment. The props and spaces needed include the wheeled vehicles themselves and curved, humpy pathways with bridges and intersections which take them over different textures and materials. And they arrive in interesting places where they can find variety, choice, adventure and challenge. They also need an accessible storage area so that they can choose what they want to use, and can take responsibility for returning it afterwards.

Interesting outdoor environments help children learn how to tackle the wider world by giving them a connection with their environment in the same way that adults' vehicles, roads and pathways do.

In short, simple activities can have a richness and variety if we think through what it is that we want the outdoor environment to do with and for children.

Finally, we should remember that children need to be able to touch the environment's natural beauty, to study it and become a part of its diversity through experiencing it for themselves; to care for its creatures and experiment with its tools; to feel with their senses the natural music and grace that surrounds them; to relax and contemplate the unfolding events in their lives. And they need to do this in environments that are richly diverse and challenging to their individual – but universal – needs. ❑

Toddlers on the move

In Newsletter 76 we examined the effects of mobility on young children. This article, based on an interview with Ursula Scholten, director of the *Landelijk Stichting Onderwijs voor Varende Kleuters* (LSOVK – the National Foundation for the Education of Bargee Toddlers) tells of LSOVK's work and how it reaches 'bargee' children, a particular group of mobile children. These children live on barges with their families, and travel the waterways of the Netherlands and beyond. The LSOVK has found ways of bringing these young children learning opportunities adapted to their way of life.

right: one of the converted barges which houses the berth school. A smaller barge to the left has been converted into a playground

The LSOVK and all the people connected with it carry out a unique task. We work with the children of *binnenvaartschippers* – 'bargee families' – people from the Netherlands who make their living by transporting all sorts of goods on barges by canal. The barges are also their homes, and house the whole family. Though they mostly travel through the Netherlands and neighbouring countries such as Belgium, France, and Germany, some families travel as far as Romania and the Black Sea. Because their livelihoods depend on being on the move, most families rarely stay in one place for long. This has tremendous implications for their children.

Bargee children of seven years and above are obliged to attend school. They have to stay either in special boarding facilities on land, cared for by trained carers, or with family members who live on land, so that they can go to school.

However, educational possibilities for bargee children under seven are limited. They are too young to live apart from their parents, and their mobile lifestyles make it impossible for them to attend ordinary kindergartens. This is where the LSOVK and its affiliated kindergartens for bargee toddlers come in.

Berth schools for young bargee children

Kindergartens, called *ligplaatsscholen* which means 'berth schools', have been especially established for the young bargee children. Though at first glance they appear no different from any other kindergarten in the Netherlands, there are fundamental differences. For example, they are always situated on converted barges in harbours and they cater solely to the children of bargees.

Each kindergarten also has teachers who undergo in-service training to enable them to understand the special characteristics of bargee children, their barge lifestyle and jargon. They must be able to work with class sizes that may vary daily between one child and 20; they must be able to cope with the fact that they may only see the same child once in many months, while constantly receiving new children into their classrooms.

In order to help the teachers recognise the development path of each child, the kindergartens for bargee children have designed a book entitled *Dit ben ik* ('This is me') which each child carries with him or her to kindergarten. It contains an introduction to the child plus a list of key activities that he or she has done or is still to do. The level to which the child is able to perform certain tasks is also given. The book gives the teacher an instant profile of each child, enabling her to plan the day's activities for the benefit of the child.

In order to keep track of how often each child attends, the kindergartens inform the LSOVK of each visit. We register all the kindergarten visits of each child – including those to one outside the Netherlands.

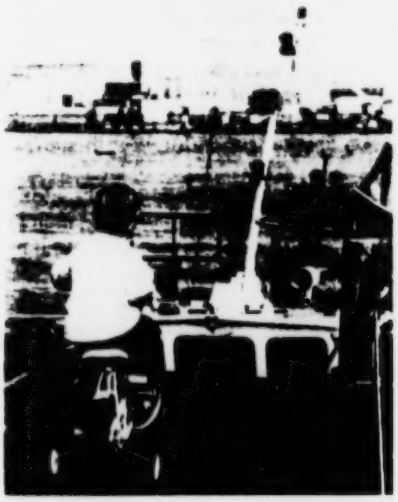
Reaching the families

Sometimes bargee children cannot come to kindergarten for a long period of time. In these cases we try to reach them in other ways. We do this through a manual, a folder, and pre-school teachers.

The *Handboek kleuter aan boord* (Toddler on Board Manual) is a manual that was developed for parents. It contains background information on child rearing issues and child development, ideas for activities that children can perform at certain stages of their development.

The *Kleuter aan boord map* (Toddler on Board Folder) is a folder which we send to the children themselves. Each child aged between three and a

The LSOVK recently won the first Oscar van Leer Award. The Award was established in 1994 to mark the 80th birthday of Oscar van Leer, son of Bernard van Leer, who was the first Chairman of the Foundation's Board. In this position he was instrumental in shaping the Foundation as it is today and, in particular, in deciding that its main focus should be on young children. The Award is given to a past or present project for excellence in enabling parents and communities to help young children realise their innate potential.



top: socialisation with other children is an important aspect of the berth schools

above: limited space on the barges means little space for young children to run and play

half and seven in the family receives his/her own folder. It contains a collection of activity booklets that are divided into age groups which are indicated by a special logo. The emphasis of the activities is that the children learn through play and through their own experiences in the world around them. For example, a bargee child may learn to count by counting containers being loaded onto a barge. The activity booklets often contain additional materials that the parents may be unable to buy when they are on the move, such as paper, thread, crayons and other odds and ends with which the children can cut and paste, make mobiles and so on.

We send the toddlers new early learning booklets 10 times a year which can be kept in the folder. Once a year we also send them an audio cassette with all the songs, stories, and rhymes that will appear in the activity booklets over the forthcoming year. The parents use the booklets as a source of ideas for developmental exercises they can do with their children when they are unable to attend school. It is so important that parents provide stimulation to their children as, when the family is on the move, there are no other children to play with. The children are also confined to a very small space on the barge, and if the weather is bad they are confined indoors in the small living area. Keeping children interested and encouraging them to learn under these circumstances is a very difficult task for parents who, though they are at home, are working.

The third way that we reach bargee children is through the *mobiele kleuterleidsters* which means 'mobile pre-school teachers'. LSOVK has a staff of three pre-school teachers who visit the barges when the children are unable to attend school for a long period. Each pre-school teacher has a particular area in which she works, and visits each family for a couple of hours. She brings along a bag full of materials for use with the children. Because the attention span of children aged three and a half to seven is so short, she has to be very well prepared. Activities range from reading, to painting, to playing with blocks.

Each mobile pre-school teacher also provides support to the parents. She discusses aspects of child rearing and development, and the parents turn to her for help with questions and worries. She also gives them ideas for activities to do with their children for the following weeks when the family is on the move. Sometimes she may visit a family a few times; with other families it may be a one time visit. A family requests a visit either directly to the pre-school teacher in their area, or they contact LSOVK and we will put them in touch with a pre-school teacher.

Though being a mobile pre-school teacher is a rewarding and unique job, the pre-school teachers themselves must be special people. They must be easy going in order to communicate effectively with the children's parents and they must be flexible in order to cope with the uncertain schedule. Because of the nature of the parents' livelihood, they may have to make visits to barges at very short notice. The most vital element of their work is that they must be able to work independently and in isolation. Each of the three pre-school teachers is in contact with the others, and this is important in order to discuss successes, problems, techniques and so on. On top of this, they meet once a month with me at the LSOVK office in Rotterdam. During these meetings we discuss the activities and progress of the past month, and any difficulties that they are facing. In this way, we provide a degree of continuous in-service training and support.

A European dimension

There are many groups of people other than barge families that are mobile. In the Netherlands alone, for example, are families who make their living by working in circuses and fun fairs. Other countries in Europe have their own groups, and of course, mobility in a European context often means crossing international borders. In Europe there is a body – the European Federation for the Education of the Children of the Occupational Travellers (EFECOT) – that collects information and provides advice on the education of the children of travelling families. As LSOVK is a member of this federation, we are quite active in networking with other groups.

Through our contacts with other organisations, a lot of interest has been generated in our methods and publications. We are now contemplating translating and adapting some of our materials for use by other mobile groups.

Minority groups can often be hidden in the sense that the broad public is unaware of their existence. For this reason we appreciate the contacts that we have built up as you can so easily feel that you are working in a vacuum. Having said that, it must not be forgotten that each group is distinct and has its own culture, jargon and terms of reference – and bargee families are certainly a unique group of people. ❑

Ms Ursula Scholten, LSOVK, Mauritsweg 50, 3012 JW Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Tel: 31.10.4130034, Fax: 31.10.4047131

EFECOT, Rue Guimard 17, 1040 Brussels, Belgium. Tel: 32.2.5025499, Fax: 32.2.5023494

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Resources

Making it work

Education for All: Making it work is a major international UNESCO programme to collect, analyse and promote successful basic education projects in the developing world. It has led to a series of publications entitled *Education for all: Making it work, innovations series* that features in detail the work of one project per issue. Five issues have been produced so far. The projects featured come from Chile, Bangladesh, India, Mali, and Trinidad. All the issues are available in English and in French, and some of them are also in Spanish or Arabic. The series is useful for practitioners, policy makers and project staff.

Copies of the series and further information can be obtained from the Basic Education Division, UNESCO, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France. Tel: 33.1.45681000, Fax: 33.1.40659406.

Reproductive health

The Program for International Training in Health (INTRAH), at the University of North Carolina, has produced a reference list of materials that focus on reproductive health. All the materials that feature in the *List of free materials in reproductive health* are free and come from around the world. Each entry contains a brief description of the materials offered, the language versions that the materials are available in, and where they can be obtained. The materials are divided into seven subject groups which include family planning, maternal and child health, primary health care and information sources. This publication, containing over 1,200 entries, is useful for anyone working in the health and development sector.

Information on the *List of free materials in reproductive health* and on INTRAH's other free publications is available from Catherine Murphy, Training Materials Officer, INTRAH, 208 N. Columbia Street., CB#8100, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514, USA. Tel: 1.919.9665636, Fax: 1.919.9666816, Telex: 3772242

INTRAH also has regional offices in Africa. The addresses of these are as follows:
Anglophone Africa: Pauline Muhuhu, Regional Director, INTRAH, P.O. Box 55699, Nairobi, Kenya.
Francophone and Lusophone Africa: Pape Gaye, Regional Director, INTRAH, B.P. 12357, Lomé, Togo.

How children grow and develop

How children grow and develop is the first book on child development produced in Kenya. It contains information on how children grow, develop and learn from conception through early childhood. Taking a holistic approach, the book looks at maternal health, family relationships, learning through play, and the role of the family and community. It also contains a chapter on children with special needs. Children's various stages of mental and physical development are outlined clearly, along with explanations of behaviour patterns. Written in simple English, and illustrated with photographs and line drawings, the book is useful for parents, pre-school teachers, and trainers.

Further information can be obtained from the Kenya Institute of Education, P.O. Box 3021, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel: 254.2.749900-9, Fax: 254.2.746973.

PACT Publications

Private Agencies Collaborating Together (PACT) Publications is an integrated publishing house which facilitates the design, production and distribution of innovative development materials. The newsletter *PACT Publications* lists materials covering a range of developmental topics that include management, training, project design, marketing, fundraising, encouraging community participation, evaluation and so on. Each entry is accompanied by a short paragraph outlining the contents of the materials.

Further information on a complete publications list, ordering and paying for materials is available from PACT Publications Inc., 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA. Tel: 1.212.6976222, Fax: 1.212.6929748.

Promoting breastfeeding

The annual world breastfeeding week, held in August 1994, was deemed a success by those agencies involved in its promotion and organisation. It generated a lot of interest in the advantages of breastfeeding as opposed to bottle

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feeding. The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) collects and produces information on breastfeeding. Among the publications that it produces are a newsletter called *WABALink*, press releases, information on women's rights, forthcoming conferences on breastfeeding and maternal health. All WABA's written information is in English.

Further information on WABA can be obtained from the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action, P.O. Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia. Tel: 60.4.6584816, Fax: 60.4.6572655.

Another organisation that promotes breastfeeding and also maternal and infant health care is the Clearinghouse on Infant Feeding and Maternal Nutrition which distributes a bulletin three times a year. The bulletin is entitled *Mothers and children* and is available in English, Spanish and French. It contains information on infants' and mothers' health, breastfeeding, nutrition and relevant resources.

Further information on the organisation and on the bulletin can be obtained from the International Clearinghouse, American Public Health Association, 1015 15th Street NW, Washington DC 20005, USA. Tel: 1.202.7895600, Fax: 1.202.7895661, e-mail: apha@apha.permanet.org or aphach@igc.apc.org.

Running a workshop

Relevant early childhood development: towards better approaches is the report of a three-day workshop held in Windhoek, Namibia at the end of 1993. The workshop, organised by the Council of Churches in Namibia and the Western Cape Foundation for Community Work in South Africa grew out of practitioners' wishes to exhange experiences with other practitioners working with young children in Southern Africa. As the workshop organisers were determined to encourage a participatory, experiential workshop, it did not include lectures, papers or presentations by 'experts'. Every participant was considered a resource person and groups of participants took responsibility for presenting different sections of the workshop. The report records the processes by which the participants ensured full participation and equality, and arrived at various new ideas to incorporate into their work. This report is useful for anyone working in development who wishes to run a workshop or activity sessions using participatory methods. The report is in English, costs N$ 18, and is available from Judy Matjila, Council of Churches in Namibia, Children's Desk, P.O. Box 41, Windhoek, Namibia.

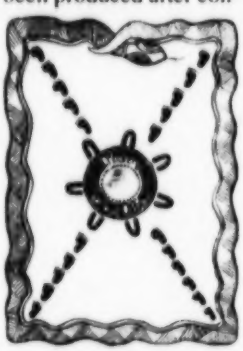
The Girl Child and the Family

In 1990 the Centres for Women's Studies in 22 universities throughout India launched a project to generate comparative data on the girl child in India. This coincided with 1990 being the Year of the Girl Child. This study project was sponsored by the Department of Women and Child Development at the Ministry of Human Resources Development. In India poverty, class and caste compound the problems of gender inequality and gender injustice. Areas covered in the study include socialisation, education, health, menstruation, and child labour. Although the findings are presented through statistical data, each research team sought to introduce a flavour of their own area, thereby making the report tangible and about real people rather than purely a collection of quantitative data. This is reinforced by the case histories of individual girls that allow glimpses into real lives. The report is aimed at policy makers, activists and academics to serve as a reminder of directions to take and as a source of ideas for programmes. This report is also useful for development workers, people with an interest in India, and those working in demographics, and girls' and women's issues and rights. The report, published in 1994, is in English.

Further information on *The Girl Child and the Family* can be obtained from the Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resources Development, 110001 New Delhi, India.

Learning about Aboriginal Children and their Culture

Learning about Aboriginal Children and their Culture are Australian curriculum guidelines, aimed at teachers working in child care centres where Aboriginal children make up either part or the whole of a class, that have been produced after consultation with Aboriginal early childhood staff, parents and community members. The first part of the booklet contains short anecdotes that give an insight into the culture and socialisation of the Aboriginal population. It then goes on to explain the ways of learning, the family backgrounds of the children, the language, and the skills that are valued. There is also a section on ways of caring and teaching which covers strategies, curriculum adaptation, and understanding and interpreting the behaviour patterns of the children. The last section touches upon selecting and using resources, and evaluating a curriculum. The booklet also includes a bibliography. It is illustrated throughout with photos and children's drawings. Although the curriculum guidelines are specific to the Aboriginal population in Australia, the booklet does give some useful tips on ways of thinking when working in a multicultural child care centre.



Further information about *Learning about Aboriginal Children and their Culture* can be obtained from Children's Services Office, Early Childhood Resource Centre, 149 Kermode Street, North Adelaide, SA 5006, Australia. Tel: 61.8.2673830, Fax: 61.8.2674716.

Bernard van Leer Foundation **Newsletter**

Number 78 April 1995

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About the Foundation

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is an international, philanthropic and professional institution based in The Netherlands. The Foundation's income is derived from the Van Leer Group of Companies – established by Bernard van Leer in 1919 – a worldwide industrial enterprise of which the Foundation is the principal beneficiary. Created in 1949 for broad humanitarian purposes, the Foundation concentrates on the development of low-cost, community-based initiatives in early childhood care and education for socially and culturally disadvantaged children from birth to eight years of age.

The Foundation provides financial support and professional guidance to governmental, academic and voluntary bodies setting up projects to enable disadvantaged children to benefit fully from edu-cational and social development opportunities. The Foundation currently supports approximately 100 major projects in some 40 developing and industrialised countries. The dissemination, adaptation and replication of successful project outcomes are crucial to the Foundation's work.

Grants are not made to individuals nor for general support to organisations. The Foundation does not provide study, research or travel grants. No grants are made in response to general appeals. In accordance with its statutes, the Foundation gives preference to countries in which the Van Leer Group of Companies is established.

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Planting a tree together

We hebben samen een boom geplant .... literally meaning 'we planted a tree together' is the title of a book produced by the organisation *School en Gezin* (school and family) and the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. It tells of the *Doelgerichte Interventieplanning* (target group focused intervention planning) – or DIP – method which was started in the weapons industry, was adapted to agricultural development strategies, and for the first time, was used by *School en Gezin* in social work in Belgium. The DIP method involves social workers and individuals from the target group working closely together to enable the latter to analyse their situation and express their concerns and desires. Through these activities they are enabled to come up with some solutions and to work out ways to implement them. The book describes how *School en Gezin* experimented with and implemented the DIP method into its work with migrant mothers and children living in an area of high unemployment and social disadvantage in Belgium. The book is useful for those working with migrant or minority families, or families living in disadvantaged situations. The book is only available in Dutch.

Further information about *We hebben samen een boom geplant* ... is available from School en Gezin, Provinciaal Integratiecentrum Limburg, Universiteitslaan 1, 3500 Hasselt, Belgium. Tel: 32.11.238120, Fax: 32.11.237646. ⌟

Dear Reader,

The theme of Newsletter 80 (October 1995) will be home-based approaches.

The emphasis will be on ways to reach small children and their caregivers in situations where centre-based activities are either not available or are inappropriate.

Your experiences and ideas are welcome. Please write to the Communications Section of the Foundation at the address shown above by mid August 1995.